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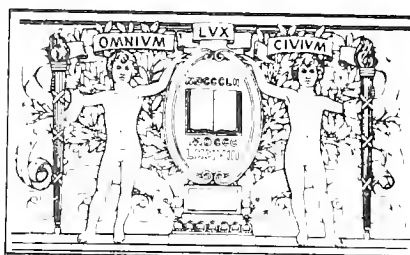
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FOR
COMMUNITY REVIEW

ROSLINDALE

Background Information, Planning Issues and
Preliminary Neighborhood Improvement Strategies



City of Boston
Boston Redevelopment Authority
District Planning Program

June, 1975

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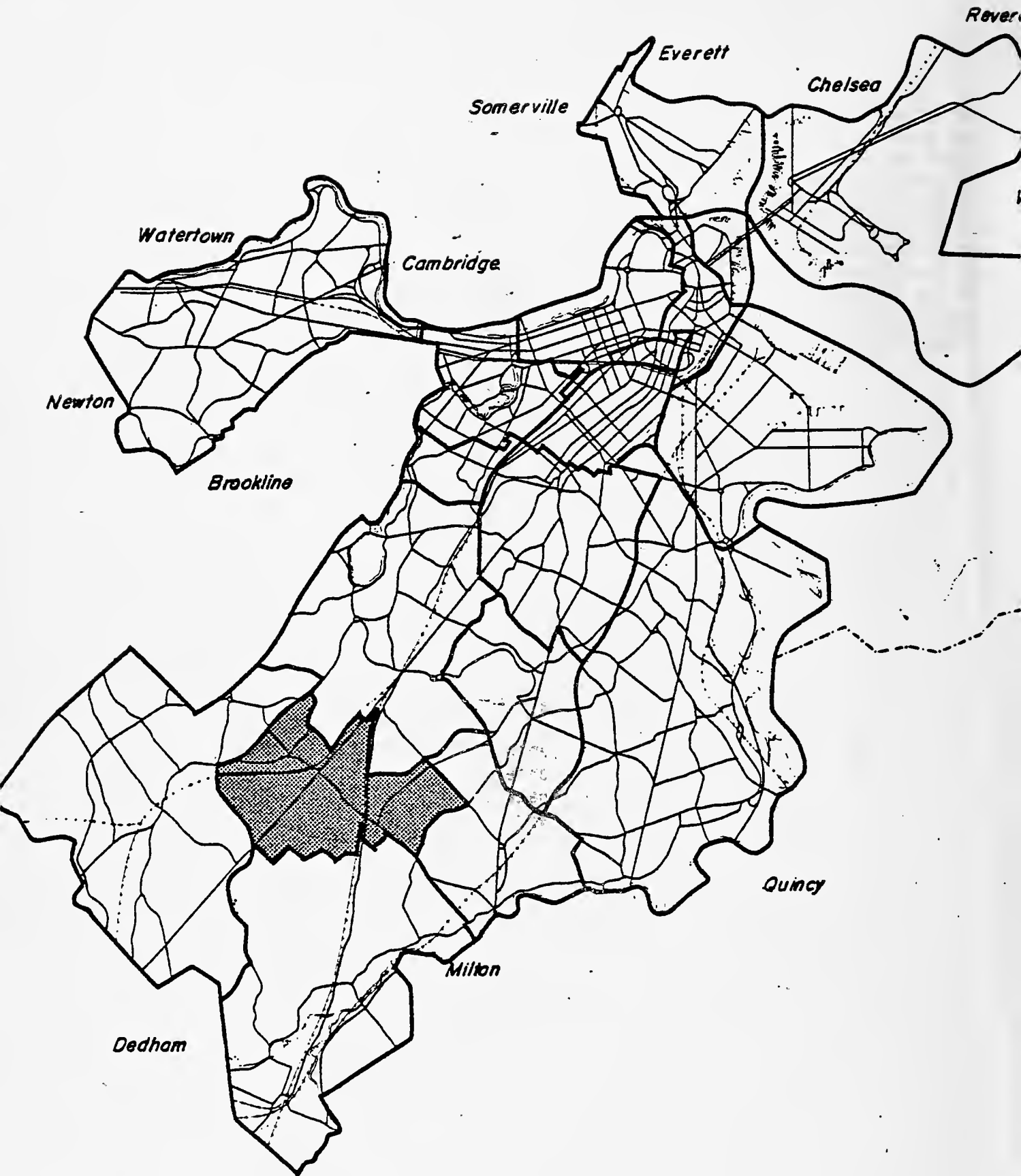
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INTRODUCTION

This planning report, prepared by the Roslindale District Planner, is intended to assist local residents and City officials who are defining the needs of the Roslindale District. The report is divided into four major sections. The first section covers the background of the district including a short history, recent census data, and private and public construction activity during the past five years. The second part highlights a number of current physical planning and housing issues which concern residents in Roslindale. Preliminary strategies which address these issues are also suggested in this section. The third part of the report summarizes the 1975 public investment program for Roslindale; and finally the fourth section outlines public projects and activities which should be undertaken by the City or other governmental organizations.



ROSLINDALE

I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

A. SHORT HISTORY

Before annexation to the City in 1873, Roslindale was part of West Roxbury and the Town of Roxbury. During the next three decades Roslindale underwent its greatest surge of development. The district gained enough people to be considered a community in itself although it was considered a part of West Roxbury.

The two railroads which trisect the district were extended to Roslindale during the 1870's. The New Haven Railroad's Washington Street Station opened in 1878. Boston's Street Railway System was extended south during this period from Forest Hills into the district.

Today Washington Street is still the district's major thoroughfare. The original Roslindale Village along Washington Street has become Roslindale Square, the modern day heart of the district. Commercial establishments and banks are concentrated in the Square, as well as the Post Office and Library. The Municipal Building, which houses the Little City Hall and the Greater Roslindale Health Service, was constructed in 1918.

B. EXISTING CHARACTERISTICS

Located in the southwestern sector of the city and surrounded by West Roxbury, Jamaica Plain, Hyde Park and Mattapan, the district is primarily residential in character having a number of very attractive neighborhoods.

The district's commercial center, Roslindale Square has been plagued by severe traffic congestion, the lack of convenient off-street parking and an inadequate mix of retail stores (there are no "magnet" or large variety goods establishments).

Washington Street, which extends north and south of Roslindale Square, is lined with houses and small businesses although the district's two housing projects are also close to Washington Street. The Archdale Project, constructed in 1951, contains 287 dwelling units and the Washington-Beech Streets Project, constructed in 1952, has 263 dwelling units.

In 1970, Roslindale's population was 32,911, representing a slight increase (4%) over 1960. Age patterns for Roslindale are similar to those in the City, although the district has a somewhat larger proportion of residents over 45 years old. Between 1960 and 1970 the proportion of age groups 0-4 and 25-64 declined, while age groups 5-24 and 65+ increased*. This was similar to city-wide trends. In 1970, median family income was \$10,539, considerably above the City's \$9,133 median.

* Roslindale has a large portion of low income elderly residents with 13% below the poverty level.



MT. HOPE

AMERICAN
LEGION

HYDE
PARK

CENTRAL
AVE

R.R.
AVE

CURRAN
ST

WASHINGTON
ST

BRANCH
ST

CENTRE
ST

NORTHERN
BLVD

ARNOLD
ARBORETUM

LOWER
WASHINGTON

CENTRE-SOUTH
WASHINGTON

METROPOLITAN HILL-BEECH

SUB-AREAS

ROSLINDALE

In 1970, Roslindale had 12,253 housing units, mostly in 1-2 family structures. Over 45% of the total units were owner occupied, compared to 27% in the City. The district's housing stock is moderately old, younger than the more urban neighborhoods but older than the more suburban areas. More than 90% of the units were built before 1939.

Only a small number of Roslindale's housing units (7-10%) are in deteriorating or delapidated condition, although within the Lower Washington area almost 40% of the structures surveyed by the Housing Inspection Department in 1970 required repairs over half between \$1,000 to \$3,500 each to reach minimum code standards. A number of these units are located near to the Southwest Corridor, where many houses are owned by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

The following is a discussion of Roslindale's sub-areas:

1. Mt. Hope

Located in the eastern portion of the district, Mt. Hope includes all of the district's cemeteries and a well maintained residential community. It is bounded by Cummins Highway, the Penn Central Mainline Railroad, Neponset Avenue, Walk Hill Street and Boston State Hospital.

In 1970, the population of Mt. Hope was 3121, an increase of 17% from 1960. Mt. Hope contains a growing elderly population compared to the City.

Of the total 1,219 housing units counted in 1970, only 150 required repairs in excess of \$1,000 each. Slightly more than one half of the structures in Mt. Hope are owner-occupied.

The Roslindale Shopping Center along American Legion Highway and the Bradlee/Stop & Shop Center, a more modern center, at American Legion and Cummins Highways serves the commercial needs of the Mt. Hope area.

2. Lower Washington

Located in the central portion of Roslindale, the Lower Washington sub-area is bounded by the Penn Central tracks, the Arnold Arboretum, Washington Street, and Cummins Highway. In 1970, Lower Washington had a population of 7480, down 15% from 1960, primarily because of land taking in the Southwest Corridor right-of-way and some housing abandonment and demolitions in the vicinity of the Archdale public housing project and along Washington Street. This area along Washington Street also contains some marginal commercial establishments.

In 1970, there were 1740 dwelling units in Lower Washington. Based on a 1974 survey of all units within this area, approximately 40% of the units needed repairs in excess of \$1,000 each. This is particularly unusual considering the high owner occupancy rate (86%) in this area.

The Washington Street strip commercial stores and Roslindale Square's stores generally serve this area.

3. Centre-South

One of the more affluent areas of the City, Centre-South (which is adjacent to West Roxbury) had a 1970 median family income of \$12,000 and a population of 6,570, up 4% from 1960. Other boundaries are Centre Street, the Needham Branch Railroad, Roslindale Square and a portion of Washington Street.

Centre-South's population composition shows generally an older population with a higher proportion over 60 (26%) than the City. Of the 1995 housing units counted in 1970, only 70 required repairs in excess of \$1,000 each. Most structures in Centre-South are owner occupied.

Roslindale Square, on the eastern edge of this area, is plagued by problems associated with older neighborhood centers including traffic congestion, inadequate parking and the disappearance of retail establishments and chain stores.

4. Metropolitan Hill - Beech

Located in the southern portion of Roslindale, the Metropolitan Hill-Beech area is bounded by the Needham Branch Railroad, Cummins Highway, West Roxbury Parkway and Hyde Park. In 1970, Metropolitan Hill-Beech had a population of 15,740, up 10% from 1960, caused by the construction of High Point Village's 540 units in the late 1960's.

In 1970, 5525 dwelling units were counted in Metropolitan Hill-Beech, of which 410 (7%) required repairs in excess of \$1,000 each. 91% of the units in this area are owner-occupied.

The only housing deterioration in this area is near the Washington/Beech Streets Housing Project along Washington Street.

Roslindale Square and the High Point Village shopping center serve this area.

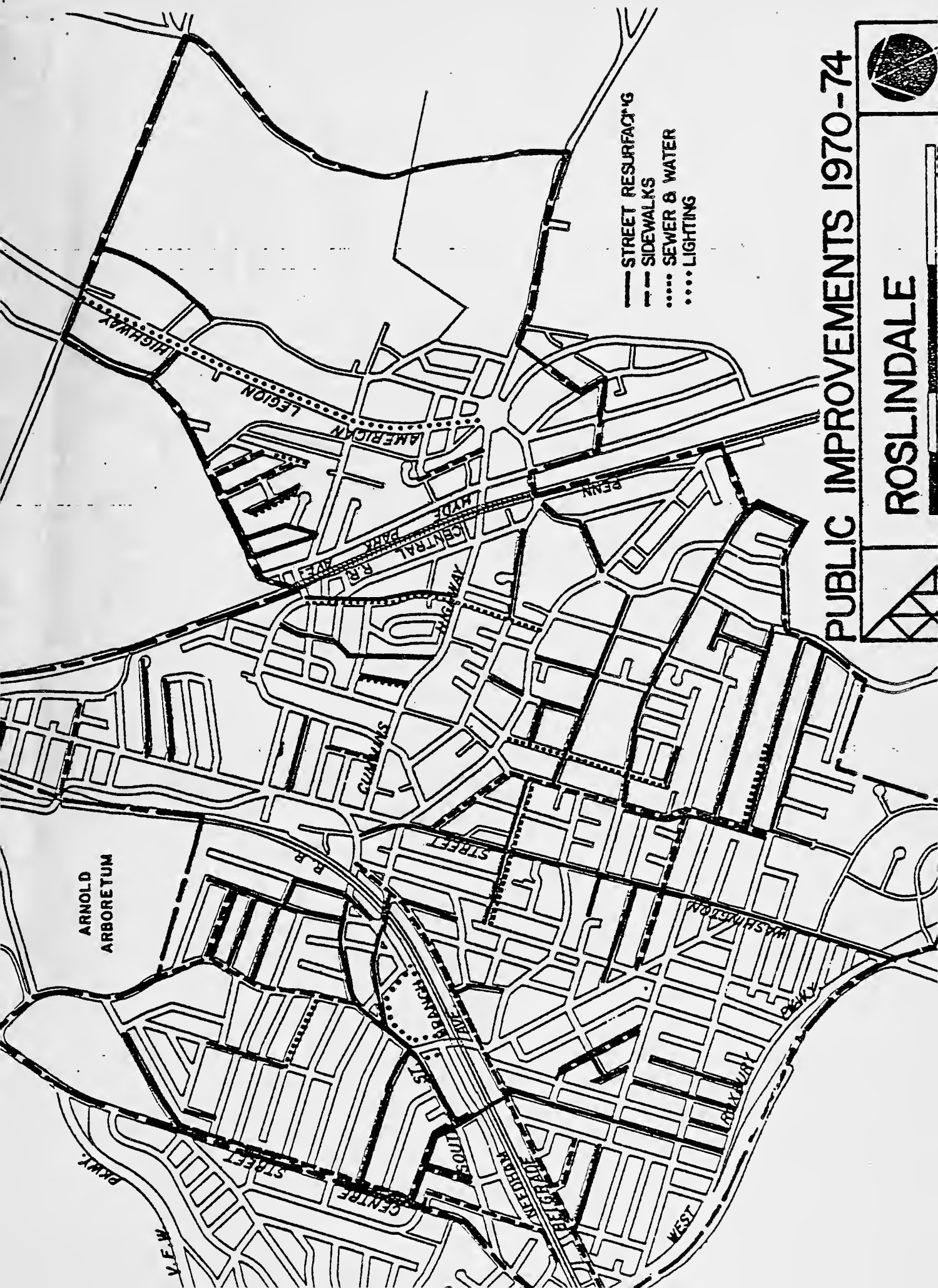
Comparative Statistics - Roslindale

1970 U.S. Census Data

ion	<u>Mt. Hope</u>	<u>Lower Washington</u>	<u>Centre-South</u>	<u>Metropolitan Hill-Beech</u>	<u>ROSLINDALE DISTRICT</u>	<u>CITY</u>
1970	3,269	7,480	6,570	15,740	32,911	639,8
Change from '60	+18%	-15%	+4%	+10%	+4%	
19-19 yrs.-1970	224	493	574	1,352	2,643	60,9
Change from '60	+18%	+21%	-30%	+21%	+8%	+
1-24 yrs.-1970	312	371	465	1,160	2,308	76,9
Change from '60	+38%	+4%	-14%	+26%	+14%	+
25 yrs. & over-1970	579	751	1,413	2,010	4,630	81,4
Change from '60	+41%	-5%	0%	+14%	+13%	
Family	NA	\$ 9,300-10,100	\$12,000	\$10,100-11,000	\$10,539	\$9,000
Families under \$5,000	NA	16%	6%	12%	NA	
Dwelling Units	1,219	1,740	1,995	5,525	10,479	232,000
Needing Repairs in excess of \$1,000	150	600	70	410	1,220	67,000
Occupied Units	51%	86%	95%	91%	45%	
Stability of Residents: in same house 5 years-1970	48%	65%	68%	65%	65%	
Not Available						

C. PAST PUBLIC INVESTMENT

Since 1970, the major thrust of the City's Capital Improvement Program has been in strengthening neighborhoods through the construction and renovation of community facilities and parks, the reconstruction of streets and the replacement of sewer and water lines. The City spent \$870,500 on rehabilitation for the Haley Elementary School, \$510,233 for the Jennie L. Barron Elementary School, \$299,000 for the Archdale Recreation Building, and \$720,000 for the pool at Healy Field. During this period, three parks were also improved: (1) Fallon Field received \$125,000; (2) Healy Field-\$220,000; and (3) Parkman Playground-\$84,000. (See Public Facilities map). At the same time, there were over 90 streets reconstructed or resurfaced, 6 streets that had water and sewer line improvements, 8 streets with new sidewalks, 2 streets with new lighting, and one footway which was reconstructed. (See Public Improvements map)

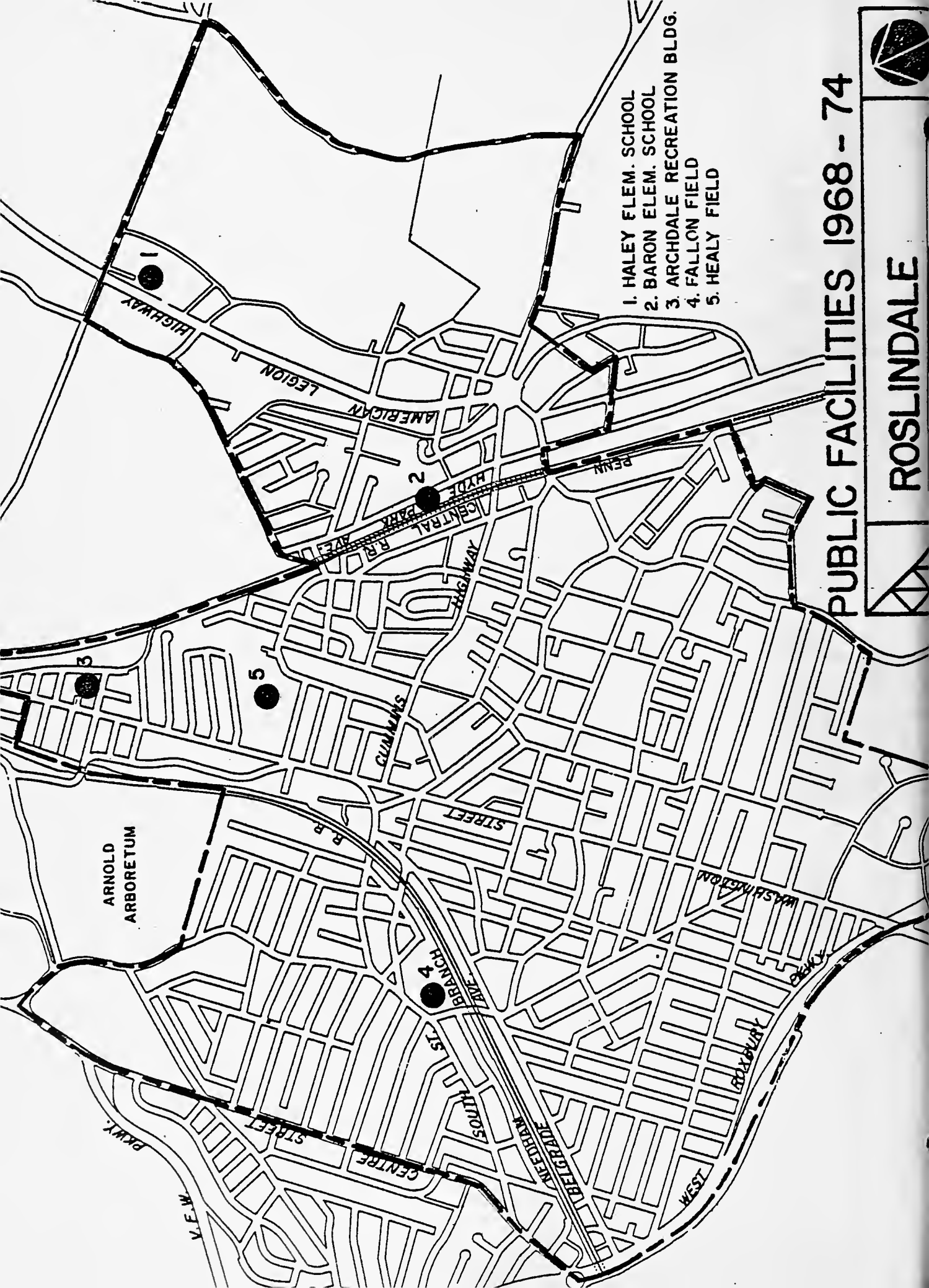


- STREET RESURFACING
- - - SIDEWALKS
- SEWER & WATER
- LIGHTING

PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS 1970-74

ROSLINDALE





- 1. HALEY ELEM. SCHOOL
- 2. BARON ELEM. SCHOOL
- 3. ARCHDALE RECREATION BLDG.
- 4. FALLON FIELD
- 5. HEALY FIELD

PUBLIC FACILITIES 1968 - 74

ROSLINDALE

D. PAST PRIVATE INVESTMENT

A review of building permits for construction activity in excess of \$10,000 shows that there has been substantial residential and commercial construction in Roslindale from 1970 to the present time. New one-family residential construction has occurred along scattered residential streets throughout the district and commercial activity has focused on the district's major traffic arteries: Washington Street, Hyde Park Avenue, American Legion Highway and Centre Street.



ARNOLD
ARBORETUM

HIGHWAY

AMERICAN AVENUE

CENTRAL AVENUE

WASHINGTON STREET

BRANCH AVENUE

ST. LUCAS STREET

WEST

ROSLINDALE PARK

ROSLINDALE

RENOVATED NEW

- RESIDENTIAL
- INDUSTRIAL
- INSTITUTIONAL
- ▲ COMMERCIAL

PRIVATE INVESTMENT 1970-74

ROSLINDALE

II. PLANNING ISSUES AND PRELIMINARY STRATEGIES

A. CHANGES IN ROSLINDALE SQUARE

1. Issues

Roslindale Square, at the crossroads of the southwestern part of the city, has shown signs of decline during the past decade. Increasing traffic congestion, the lack of convenient off-street parking, retail store turnovers to less desirable uses and the presence of blighting influences such as the vacant and decayed Rialto Theatre building have contributed to this decline. In addition, the right-of-way of the Needham Branch (Penn Central) Railroad continues to be an unattractive feature in the Square with a poorly maintained parking lot and accessory buildings in poor condition. Vandalism and store window breaks have also been a constant problem in the Square.

Because of these reasons, Roslindale Square has been unable to attract shoppers and has lost business to many of the outlying shopping centers such as Dedham Mall, American Legion Highway Center and West Roxbury.

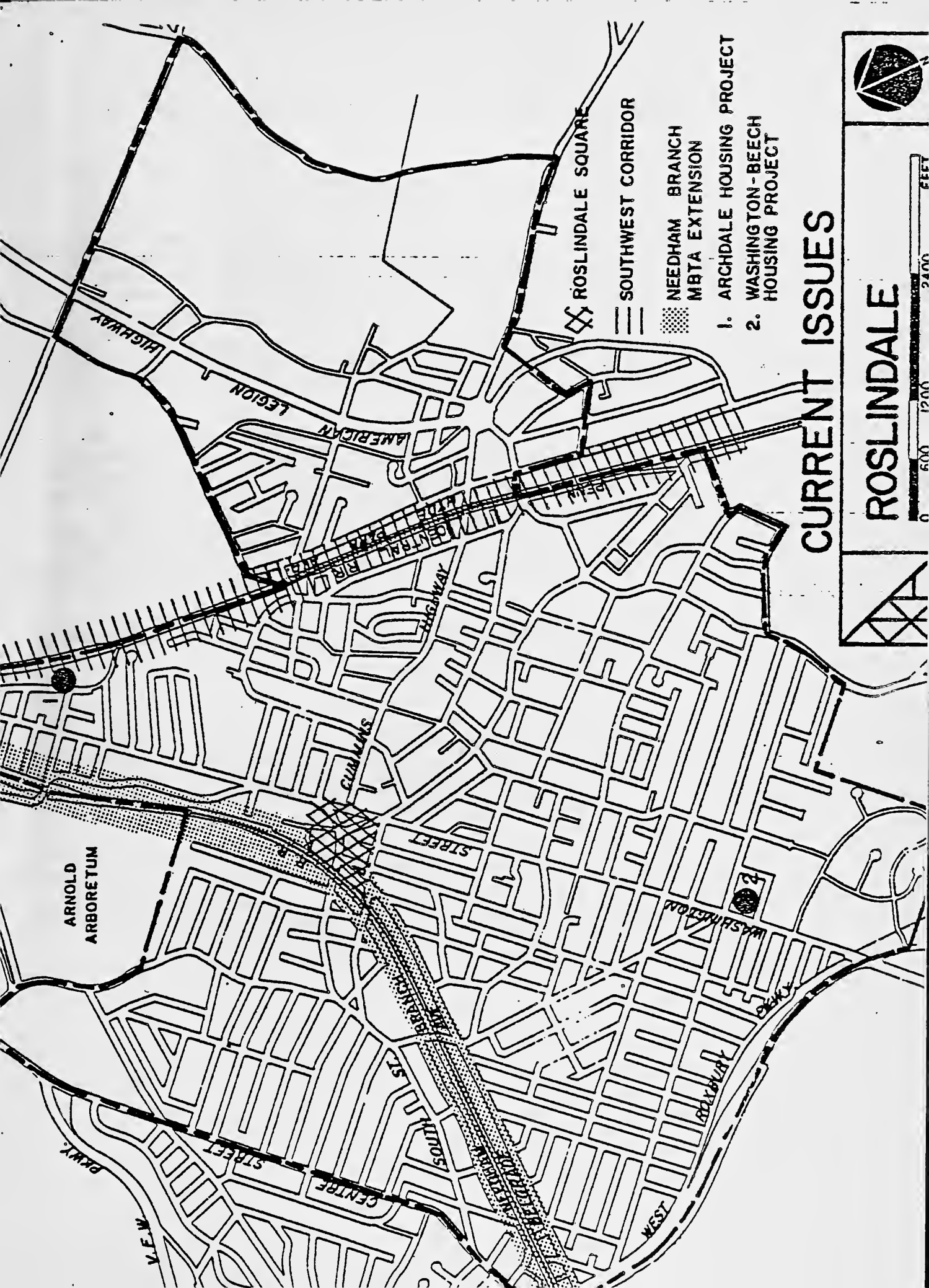
2. Strategies

A major planning effort should be undertaken in cooperation with a strong Roslindale Square commercial organization to stimulate new business in the Square. In 1975, the City will make major improvements in the Square including the upgrading of the Taft Hill Parking Lot, improvements to Adams Park and demolition and acquisition of the Rialto Theatre and development of lot for extension of an off-street parking facility. However, more attention is needed to the Square's traffic and parking problems as well as using the extension of a transit line along the Needham Branch to attract new retail uses to the Square.

The City should develop storefront rehabilitation and off-street parking programs. Under the storefront program, merchants should be provided with incentives of a cash rebate to improve their storefronts. Under the parking program, if an appropriate parking site can be identified, the City should develop a new off-street parking area. The rear of commercial establishments along Corinth Street offers this off-street parking potential to Roslindale shoppers.

Traffic congestion can be approached in a number of ways including street widening, realigning or direction changes. To improve traffic problems associated with bus traffic in the Square, a study should be undertaken of the bus stop locations and scheduling of buses.

To reduce vandalism and crime in the square, a foot patrolman has been assigned by the Police Department to patrol the Square six days per week between 12 p.m. and 1 a.m. This program should be continued and expanded in future years.



ARNOLD
ARBORETUM

ROSLINDALE SQUARE

SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR

NEEDHAM BRANCH
MBTA EXTENSION

1. ARCHDALE HOUSING PROJECT
2. WASHINGTON-BEECH
HOUSING PROJECT

CURRENT ISSUES

ROSLINDALE



B. HOUSING DETERIORATION

1. Issues

There are at least three areas in Roslindale where housing deterioration has been noted.

- Lower Washington: In this area, (once proposed for an intensive code enforcement program) there has been considerable disinvestment in the two and three family wood frame housing stock as well as a decline in the percentage of owner-occupants. The Archdale public housing project which has a number of boarded-up and vacant units has had a negative impact on this area. Mixed commercial uses, lack of street maintenance and crime have also had a negative impact.
- Southwest Corridor: In the Roslindale portion of the Southwest Corridor, there are abandoned and boarded-up houses as well as vacant land which is owned by the State Department of Public Works. Aside from the proposal for the construction of 119 elderly units by the Boston Housing Authority on a site along Cliffmont Street, the State has not returned this land to private hands which has led to a frustration in the nearby residential community.
- Metropolitan Hill: There has been some residential deterioration in this generally one and two family owner-occupied area.

2. Strategies

The City's Housing Improvement Program (HIP) should concentrate on the residential areas outlined above. In addition, the capital should be directed at street, sidewalk, sewer and water line and park improvements in these areas to increase the impact of the HIP Program.

In the Southwest Corridor, City and State efforts should work to return vacant land to residential uses, and to allow existing buildings to be sold. However, before final disposition of the land and buildings, proper maintenance by the State should be insured.

C. NEED FOR CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS AND PUBLIC FACILITIES

1. Issues

Many of Roslindale's parks, streets and utilities are in need of replacement or repair. Specific park and recreation issues include the lack of a tot lot and playground area at the Washington-Beech Public Housing project; the deterioration of Metropolitan District Commission's Cardillo Playground and expansion of Pagel Playground which poorly serves its local neighborhood.

There are a number of streets and bridges which should be upgraded in Roslindale including the Canterbury Street Bridge (including the intersection of Cliffmont and Canterbury Streets), Cummins Highway Bridge over the Penn Central tracks and residential streets scattered throughout the district. While the Roslindale High School has been programmed for rehabilitation, the need for a new High Point middle school has been critical for the last five years as has been the need to renovate the Irving School.

2. Strategies

Boston Redevelopment Authority projections indicate that Roslindale's population will remain stable at 40,000 people over the next decade. To insure this stability improvements are necessary to the district's parks, schools, streets, and water lines. A priority listing of capital improvement needs should be established and a program phased over the next five years. A priority will be the construction of the High Point Middle School, which must await clarification of the Phase II desegregation plan and the approval of final school district lines.

The strategy for improving MDC's Cardillo Playground should consider relocation of the facility to 457-485 Hyde Park Avenue, which is vacant and owned by the State Department of Public Works (within the Southwest Corridor). During neighborhood planning sessions with Southwest Corridor residents in Roslindale, there was an expressed desire for using the present Cardillo Playground site at the corner of Blakemore Street and Hyde Park Avenue as a commercial area and relocating the virtually abandoned open-space facility directly to the south. Since MDC may not be anxious to continue providing neighborhood parks, the City should consider developing this new facility.

D. ELDERLY HOUSING

1. Issues

The housing needs of the elderly have generally been neglected over the years in Roslindale. Aged persons continue to pay a disproportionately high percentage of their (fixed) incomes for shelter, with a concomitant curtailment of expenditures for other essentials - including food, health care, clothing, transportation, etc. Elders are also living in physically inadequate dwellings and in undesirable environments such as in high crime areas, adjacent to nuisances (noise and air pollution) and far away from transit, shopping and community facilities.

In 1970, 15.3% of Roslindale's population was over 65 years compared to 12.8% in the City as a whole. The waiting list for Boston Housing Authority (BHA) elderly units is very long and it may take 2-3 years before someone on that list is placed in one of the City's housing developments. Roslindale does not have an exclusive BHA project for the elderly although a section of the Washington-Beech Project has been traditionally occupied by elderly tenants. Roslindale's senior citizens currently place their names on waiting lists for BHA projects for the elderly in Hyde Park, West Roxbury and other districts.

2. Strategy

During 1975 the Boston Housing Authority expects to begin construction on - 119 units of elderly housing along Cliffmont Street in the Southwest Corridor. Also, the Massachusetts Housing and Finance Agency will finance the conversion this year of 1 Conway Street to 28 elderly units. In subsequent years other sites should be considered for elderly housing because of the district's growing number of elders. If possible sites should be pursued near Roslindale Square to help in its revitalization.

E. TRANSIT DEVELOPMENT: NEEDHAM BRANCH

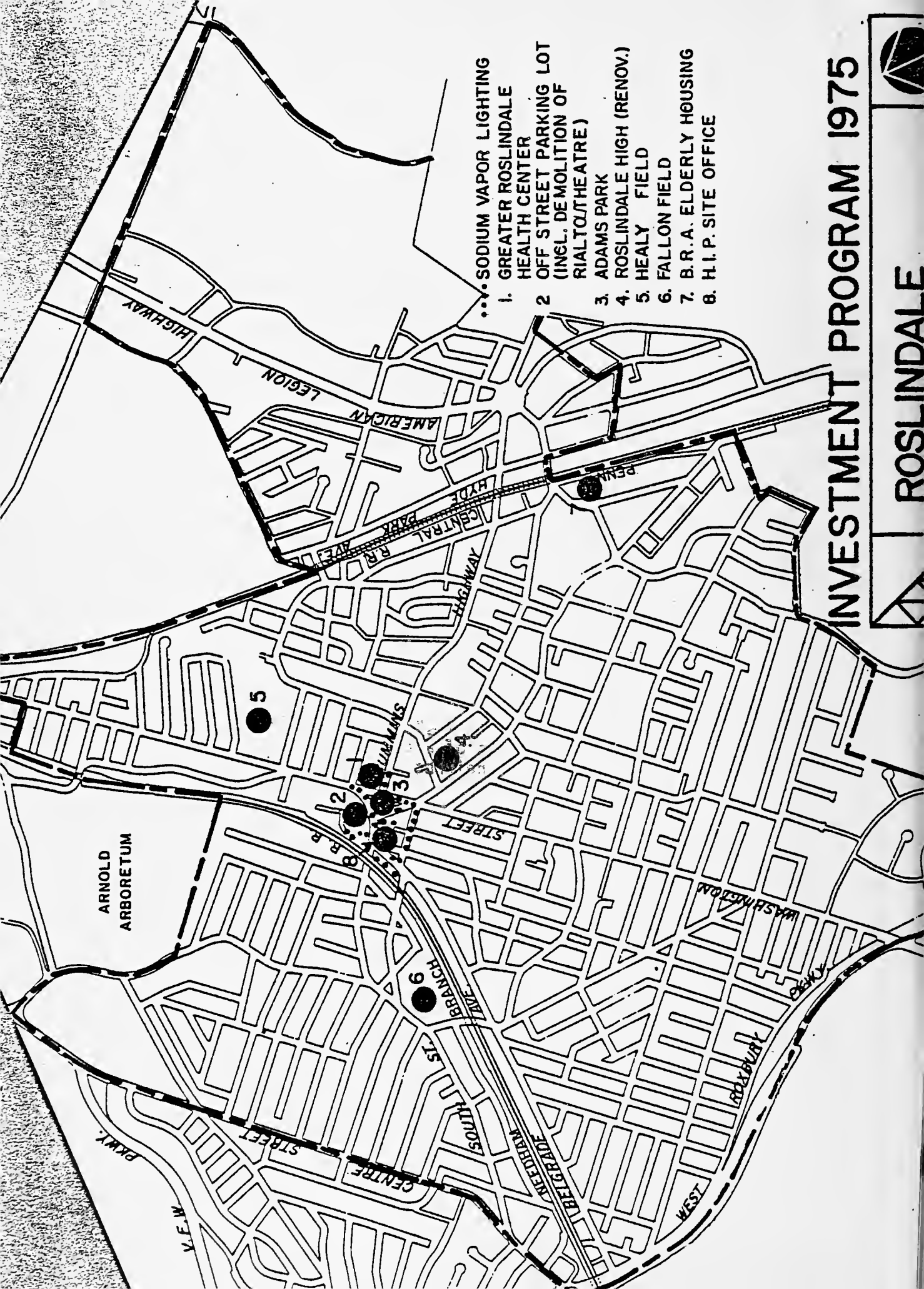
1. Issues

Roslindale is located close to the end of the City's mass transit network, with connections to Forest Hills MBTA Station by bus service only. The proposed extension of the Orange Line along the Needham Branch Railroad from Forest Hills has been warmly accepted by most residents in Roslindale although there has been considerable discussion of the type of service (i.e. rapid transit v.s. upgraded commuter line) and the location of stations within Roslindale. Currently, City residents are working out agreements on the type of service with residents of Needham (where the line may terminate), and with MBTA's consultants (C.E. Maguire Associates), who are completing the Environmental Impact Report on the MBTA extension.

2. Strategies

The City, the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) and the Southwest Development Coordinator are working closely with local groups as well as with the MBTA and its consultants on the final determination of the type of service and station locations for the proposed extension line. This effort should terminate in the Fall, 1975, although work program delays may extend completion of the Environmental Impact report until the first part of 1976. At the same time, the BRA expects to be working closely with the Metropolitan Area Planning Commission (MAPC) on joint development studies at the various station stops in both Roslindale and West Roxbury. This effort should be underway in the summer of 1975.

The timetable for construction of the Needham Branch Extension Line requires at least one year in engineering-technical design after the completion and acceptance of the Environmental Impact Report by the State and Federal governments.



...SODIUM VAPOR LIGHTING

1. GREATER ROSLINDALE HEALTH CENTER
2. OFF STREET PARKING LOT (INCL. DEMOLITION OF RIALTO/THEATRE)
3. ADAMS PARK
4. ROSLINDALE HIGH (RENOV.)
5. HEALY FIELD
6. FALLON FIELD
7. B.R.A. ELDERLY HOUSING
8. H.I.P. SITE OFFICE

INVESTMENT PROGRAM 1975

ROSLINDALE

III. 1975 PUBLIC INVESTMENT PROGRAM

The 1975 public investment program concentrates in three areas: housing, commercial area revitalization, and capital improvements.

A. HOUSING

The Housing Improvement Program (HIP) which provides incentives for rehabilitation of 1-6 unit owner-occupied structures, will be available throughout Roslindale and has funds for the rehabilitation of approximately 200 buildings (\$150,000). This program will include the opening of a site office in Roslindale Square (shared with West Roxbury) to administer the program.

New housing efforts include the construction of 119 units of elderly housing funded by the Boston Housing Authority at Cliffmont and Canterbury Streets.

B. COMMERCIAL AREA REVITALIZATION

The city's effort toward commercial area revitalization includes a number of improvements to Roslindale Square, as follows:

1. Installation of new sodium vapor lighting (Fall 1974;
2. Renovation of Taft Hill parking lot (80-spaces) including new lighting;
3. Demolition and acquisition of Rialto Theatre and development of lot for extension of off-street parking facility;
4. Installation of lights and benches in Adams Park; and
5. Rehabilitation of a portion of the Municipal Building for use as a neighborhood health center.

C. CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

The city's capital improvement program for Roslindale includes general rehabilitation of Roslindale High School, renovation of play equipment at Fallon Field and Healy Playfield; construction of a second baseball diamond for the Parkway Little League along Baker Street in West Roxbury; and reconstruction of Pagel Playground.

IV. FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS

It is important that public funds be used in future years to maintain the viability of Roslindale's residential neighborhoods. The areas for future public investment are outlined in a general manner below. These areas should be discussed and refined at neighborhood meetings during the coming months and specific recommendations made. The citizen participation process is critical to the selection of specific projects to be funded.

Future investment for housing should include the continuation of the City's Housing Improvement Program to provide for the rehabilitation of approximately 200 housing units annually. Modernization funds should be used to improve the Archdale and Washington-Beech Housing Projects. In addition, 100 units of elderly housing should be constructed in 1976 to respond to Roslindale's needs.

Housing investment in the Southwest Corridor should provide for improvements to existing houses and commercial structures boarded-up on Blakemore Street and Hyde Park Avenue.

Future capital investment needs include: (1) construction of the High Point Middle School; (2) addition to the Irving School; (3) relocation of MDC's Cardillo Playground; (4) replacement of bridges over the Penn Central mainline Railroad at Cummins Highway and at Canterbury Street; (5) construction of a tot lot at the Washington-Beech Housing Project; and (6) introduction of a systematic water pipe improvement program for Roslindale.

The City's efforts at revitalization of Roslindale Square should include: (1) develop a 50-100 space off-street parking facility in Corinth Street area; (2) initiate a feasibility study of commercial development possibilities adjacent to the proposed Roslindale Square MBTA station; (3) continue and expand foot patrolman in Roslindale Square; and (4) encourage merchants to rehabilitate their storefronts.

FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS as related to issues, strategies and 1975 Investment Program

Issue	Strategy	1975 Investment Program	Future Investment Needs
Need for Capital Improvements and Public Facility	Establish priority listing to use capital expenditures to strengthen neighborhoods	Roslindale High (rehab)-in programming - \$6.6 million Health Center (Rehab of Municipal Bldg.) - \$76,500 Fallon Field 75,000 Healy Field- 75,000 Parkway Little League Second Baseball Diamond- 40,000 Pagel Playground- 35,000	New High Point Middle School Irving School Addition Relocation of MDC's Cardillo Playground Bridge Improvements: Cummins Highway Canterbury Street Tot lot (Washington-Beech Housing Project) Systematic water pipe improvement program
Changes in Roslindale Square	Organize strong business group reduce traffic congestion Develop new off-street parking	Site development of Rialto Theatre lot for additional parking area \$60,000 -renovate Taft Hill parking lot- \$160,000	Develop a 50-100 space public lot in Corinth Street area
	Develop joint development options with Needham Branch Transit extension line Curb vandalism and crime	C.E. Maguire Environmental Impact Study of Needham Branch Extension for MBTA Lighting for Taft Hill Parking lot- \$25,000 Lighting program (Fall 1974) \$92,300 Installation of lights and benches in Adams Park \$30,000 Foot patrolman-6 days per week, two shifts	Designating a small area redevelopment program in conjunction with MBTA Roslindale Sq. station Continue and expand foot patrolman in Roslindale Sq.

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FUTURE INVESTMENT NEEDS as related to issues, strategies and 1975 Investment Program

Issue	Strategy	1975 Investment Program	Future Investment Needs
Changes in Roslindale Square (cont.)	Eliminate blighting influences	Demolition and acquisition of Rialto Theatre - \$40,000	Demolish sheds in Needham RR. right-of-way
Housing deterioration	Preservation of stock HIP	HIP-\$150,000 (200 building) -open site office shared with West Roxbury	HIP-200 buildings each year
	Use capital expenditures to strengthen deteriorated neighborhoods		Fund needed projects in areas which have utilized HIP
	Return Southwest Corridor land to city and private interest	119 units of BHA elderly housing at Cliffmont Street	HIP to assist in rehab of these homes
Elderly Housing	Encourage new elderly development both public and private	119 units of BHA elderly housing along Cliffmont St. 28 units of MHFA elderly (renovated) housing at 1 Conway St.	At least 100 additional, low income elderly units are needed in 1976
Public Transportation Improvements Needham Branch MBTA line	Establish guidelines for type of service to be introduced into Roslindale		Pending completion of Environmental Impact Statement
	Establish guidelines for joint development possibilities at station locations		Pending completion of Environmental Impact Statement



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